

BEWARE OF D.A. CARSON

Updated December 7, 2004 (first published July 12, 2002) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) –

D.A. Carson is a professor of New Testament at the New Evangelical Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and is the author of several influential books. One of these is “The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism,” which is often promoted by fundamentalists who defend textual criticism and the modern versions. (By Carson’s standard, the only “realism” is to abandon the defense of the King James Bible and to accept the findings of unbelieving textual criticism.)

D.A. Carson is not a man that fundamentalists should be following. He walks in the most radical of New Evangelical circles, being associated with organizations such as *Christianity Today* and the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), both of which are deeply compromised theologically. *Christianity Today* has been one of the chief voices for New Evangelicalism for 50 years. It has promoted everything from Billy Graham to Fuller Theological Seminary to Robert Schuller to Karl Barth to R-rated movies and rock & roll.

As for the Evangelical Theological Society (Carson spoke at the ETS conference in 1999) its members voted in November 2003 NOT to expel two members (Clark Pinnock and John Sanders) who espouse the heresy of open theology. Open theism denies the foreknowledge and omniscience of God, claiming that He does not know the future perfectly. Open theist Gregory Boyd says, “God can’t foreknow the good or bad decisions of the people He creates until He creates these people and they in turn create their decisions.” In *The Battle for the Bible*, Harold Lindsell gave examples of members of the Evangelical Theological Society who deny the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. One was Richard Bube, a professor at Stanford University. In his book *The Encounter Between Christianity and Society*, Bube claimed that Christians are not required to believe that there was a real “man by the name of Adam who experienced the events of Genesis in a natural historical sense.” Bube also claimed (falsely) that “there is no information in the Bible that is ... opposed to theories of organic evolution” (*The Battle for the Bible*, pp. 128-129).

No man who is associated with the *Christianity Today* or the Evangelical Theological Society takes Biblical separation seriously.

A DEFENDER OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

In his book “The Inclusive Language Debate” (Baker Books, 1998), Carson argues for extensive use of inclusive language translation techniques. He states, for example, that it is fine to change the singular pronouns of John 14:23 to plural. This is what the inclusive language NIVI (New International Version Inclusive, published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1996) does. It reads, “Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” Carson supports that. Carson asks, “So why treat the plurals of the NIVI of John 14:23 as a serious problem in which individual application will be lost?” The answer to this is not difficult: Because the Holy Spirit is the author of that verse and He gave it in the singular!

Carson defends many such inclusive language perversions. He says it is fine for the NIVI to change “brother” in Matthew 5:22 to “brother or sister.” He says, in fact, that this is “preferable.” He supports the NIVI reading in John 11:50 and 1 Corinthians 15:21, which changes “man” to “human being,” even though both passages speak of Christ’s death. He also defends the NIVI translation of Revelation 3:20, which changes the singular pronoun “eat with HIM” to the plural “eat with THEM,” thus destroying the lovely personal aspect of Christ’s promise. He discusses the changes in Psalm 8:4 from “what is man” to “what are mere mortals” and “the son of man” to “human beings.” Even though this destroys a Messianic prophecy, Carson argues, “I am not convinced that those critics are right who say that terrible damage has been done by inclusive-language translations of this passage because they have somehow squeezed Christ to the periphery.”

Carson says, “But the argument that attaches a particular formal equivalent in gender assignment to faithfulness to the Word of God is profoundly mistaken in principle” (p. 98). No, D.A. Carson is profoundly mistaken.

Do the fundamentalists who are distributing Carson’s book agree with these things? Those fundamentalist schools that are selling Carson’s book in their bookstores and recommending it to their students, are they also warning about Carson’s apostasy?

A PROMOTER OF THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

The November 23, 1993, *Christianity Today* contained a large ad featuring “Evangelical scholar” D.A. Carson promoting the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This is a revision of the extremely liberal 1952 RSV which blasphemously changed “virgin” to “woman” in Isaiah 7:14. Practically every one of the RSV translators was a theological modernist, many of whom denied the virgin birth, miracles, blood atonement, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. The NRSV translation committee was headed up by Bruce Metzger, who claims that Genesis is a mixture of history and myth and that Job and Jonah are ancient folktales. The wretchedly apostate National Council of Churches owns the copyright to the RSV and the NRSV and receives a royalty fee for each copy sold. Carson’s association with the NRSV is plain evidence of his own apostasy.

A DEFENDER OF FORM CRITICISM

Carson also defends the use of Form Criticism in the Gospels in the book “An Introduction to the New Testament” (Zondervan, 1992). Form Criticism is the attempt to discover the source for the Gospels, predicated upon the theory that the Gospels are based on secondary material, that Matthew and Luke were based on Mark or that Mark was based on Matthew and Luke or that Mark is based on a mythical “Q” source, and such things. Instead of rebuking such unbelief, Carson (along with the co-authors Douglas Moo and Leon Morris) accepts many of the premises of form criticism.

When discussing the origin of the Gospels, Carson makes NO MENTION OF DIVINE INSPIRATION. Consider this statement:

“Moreover, many of the assumptions on which form criticism is based appear to be valid: there was indeed a period of mainly oral transmission of the gospel materials; much of it was probably in small units; there probably was a tendency for this material to take on certain standard forms; and the early church has undoubtedly influenced the way in which this material was handed down. Defined narrowly in this way, there is undoubtedly a place for form criticism in the study of the Gospels” (*An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 23, 24).

In reality, all of these things are purely speculative and we do not know that any of them are true; but Carson and the other editors give up all of this ground to the liberal form critics. Furthermore, to say that the “early church has undoubtedly influenced the way in which this material was handed down” is a plain rejection of the doctrine of divine inspiration. Either the Gospels were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit or they were written by natural processes. There can be no middle ground for a believer. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth (John 16:13) and 2 Timothy 3:16 states that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. That settles the matter. Whether or not the authors of the Gospels used some secondary sources is a meaningless question for the believer. If they did use secondary sources, we will never know what they were. God has not chosen to reveal that to us, so it is without significance. All we need to know is that the Holy Spirit gave the Gospels. Period. It is our duty to study those Gospels believingly and preach them to the whole world instead of pursuing the vain path of wasting countless hours trying to ascertain whether there was a document called “Q” or whether Matthew might have borrowed something from Mark or Mark from Matthew, etc.

Furthermore, the Gospels are miraculous upon their very face. They contain not merely eyewitness accounts that could have been produced by men, but many things that could not have been produced by even the closest human observer. They describe the thoughts and motives of men’s hearts, for example. How can that be accounted for on any naturalistic basis? The disciples could hear what Jesus said and see what He did, but they

could not reach into His very mind to see, for instance, that He knew the thoughts of men's hearts (i.e., Lk. 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 11:17). And they could not discern the actual motives of men such as Pilate (i.e., Mk. 15:15). Only God the Holy Spirit could have produced the Gospels. It is foolish and unbelieving to attempt to look for any other explanation or foundation.

Carson and his co-authors ask, "What is the likelihood that independent translators would come up with exactly the same wording in so many places?" (p. 29).

The answer to that is not difficult. The Holy Spirit gave them those words!

They state, "Only a theory that includes as a major component literary interdependence among the Synoptic Gospels is capable of explaining the data" (p. 29).

Again, that is not true. The doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Gospels explains the data.

Carson and his fellow New Evangelicals repeat the standard Form Criticism argument that Matthew in 13:58 omitted the words "could not do any miracles there" that appears in Mark 6:5 in order to remove "the potentially troublesome implication that Jesus was incapable of working a miracle." In fact, the Holy Spirit in Mark is presenting Christ as the Servant whereas in Matthew the Holy Spirit is presenting Christ as the King. The different purposes of their Gospels dictated what was included or omitted from Christ's earthly life. Those choices were not made by Mark or Matthew; they were made by God. Yet, Carson says the unbelieving Form Criticism argument "has some weight."

Carson says, "But their failure to preserve the *ipsissima verba* Jesu (the authentic words of Jesus) does not mean that they have tampered with the *ipsisima vox* Jesu (the authentic voice of Jesus)" (p. 44). That is the old modernistic argument that the Gospels give only a semblance of what Christ said rather than His actual words. I do not believe this for a moment. Though I cannot answer every problem that arises when attempting to compare similar passages in the four Gospels, the solution for a believer is not to give up the doctrine of verbal inspiration or to think that the Gospels do not give us a perfectly accurate transmission of Christ's actual words and deeds. (By the way, many of the "problems" in the Gospels are dealt with in our book *Things Hard to Be Understood*.)

Furthermore, Carson and his co-authors give up Mark 16:9-20, saying, "But the arguments against this ending [Mark 16:9-20] being original are very strong. First, it is missing from what are generally considered the two most important manuscripts (the uncials Aleph and B), as well as several others" (p. 103). Note that these New Evangelicals prefer the two corrupt Greek manuscripts, Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Aleph), and they are willing to rip Mark 16:9-20 from the Bible largely on that basis. If Mark ends at verse 8, it ends with the disciples amazed and confused and it omits the

victory of the Gospel through Christ's resurrection and ascension. If I did not know one word of Greek, I would still have enough sanctified common sense to know that the Holy Spirit wrote Mark 16:9-20.

DENYING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION

As a consulting editor of the *New Bible Commentary*, D.A. Carson is responsible for the following attempt to undermine the historicity of the Genesis account of creation:

"Most of these stories [in Genesis 1-11] deal with periods long before writing was invented, so they cannot be 'history' in the strict sense of the term or be verified by evidence from outside the Bible. ... T. Jacobsen has coined the term 'mytho-historical' to describe such literature ... 'Myth' has negative overtones, so 'proto-history' is probably a better way to describe Genesis 1-11. In the present state of knowledge it is difficult to know how to relate these chapters to modern scientific discovery. ... In that these are days of God's activity not human work, it is unlikely that they are supposed to last twenty-four hours" (*New Bible Commentary*, Intervarsity Press, 1994, consulting editors D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, G.J. Wenham).

This is nonsense, and the only reason why the authors of the *New Bible Commentary* attempt to deny the historicity of Genesis 1 is their capitulation to the pseudo-science, the "science so called" of evolution. There are at least nine reasons why we can be certain that the first chapters of Genesis are historical:

- a. The six days of creation were evening and morning days, thus referring to normal 24-hour days (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).
- b. When the word "day" is prefaced with a numerical adjective in the Bible, it always refers to a normal day -- "first day" (Gen. 1:5), "second day" (Gen. 1:8), etc. "Although the Hebrew word for 'day' (*yom*) is used nearly two thousand times in the Old Testament, only in rare cases can it refer to a time period longer than twenty-four hours, and then only if the context demands it (e.g., 'day of the Lord'). However, when a numerical adjective is attached to the word 'day' (200 known cases in the OT) its meaning is always restricted to twenty-four hours" (John Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*, p. 28).
- c. The "days" of creation are linked to "years" in Gen. 1:14. "Since the word 'days' in Genesis 1:14 is linked with the word 'years,' it is quite obvious that our well-known units of time are being referred to, their duration being determined not by cultural or subjective circumstances, but by the fixed movements of the earth in reference to the sun. Otherwise the term 'years' would be meaningless" (Whitcomb).
- d. The six days of creation are the same type of days as the sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11).

- e. The first five chapters of the Bible is written as history; there is nothing in the record to indicate that it is to be interpreted non-literally, as poetry or symbolism. When the Bible uses symbolism, it plainly distinguishes that it is such and it gives the key for interpreting the symbols. We see this in Revelation, for example. In chapter 17 John describes a woman sitting on a beast, and he plainly tells us that this is a mystery and he gives the interpretation of the symbolic language in the passage itself (vv. 7-18). Genesis 1-5, though, is written as history. Gen. 5:5 says that Adam lived 930 years and then died. If Adam was merely an allegory of some kind for mankind in general, what happened to mankind after Adam died?
- f. Adam and Eve are spoken of in the rest of the Bible as real people. Adam and Eve are mentioned 34 times in the Bible. They are mentioned in at least four books of the Old Testament (Gen. 2-5; De. 32:8; 1 Ch. 1:1; and Job 31:33) and in eight books of the New (Mt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-8; Lk. 3:38; Rom. 5:12, 14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; and Jude 14). No one who believes that the Bible is the infallible Word of God can doubt the historicity of the account of Adam and Eve.
- g. The serpent of Genesis 3 is spoken of in the New Testament as the devil (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). The Bible always treats the devil as a real historical person.
- h. If Adam and Eve were not historical figures, the fall is a myth and redemption through the cross of Christ is nonsense. See Romans 5:12-19.
- i. To deny the historicity of Adam is to deny Jesus Christ. He referred to Adam and Eve as historic (Mk. 10:6-8). His genealogy is traced from Adam (Lk. 3:23-38). Further, the N.T. makes direct comparisons between Christ and Adam (Rom. 5:17; 1 Cor. 15:22-45).

When D.A. Carson questions the historicity of Genesis and supports heretical concepts such as “proto-history,” it is evident that Bible believers should have nothing to do with his work. He is a very dangerous man. The Bible warns that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal. 5:9).

CONCLUSION

New Evangelical scholars are corrupt because they have renounced Biblical separation and have refused to mark and avoid theological modernism. Contrary to the command of Scripture to separate from heretics, New Evangelicals study the writings of theological modernists, quote from them uncritically, and pursue degrees at their feet. The Bible warns that “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33), but New Evangelicals have ignored this. The resulting downgrade in the doctrine of inspiration among New Evangelicals has been well documented even by some of the founders of

New Evangelicalism, such as Harold Lindsell (*The Battle for the Bible*, 1976, and *The Bible in the Balance*, 1979), Francis Schaeffer (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 1984), and David Wells (*No Place for Truth Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* 1993). (For extensive documentation of this see our book *Evangelicals and Rome*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.)

Increasingly we are seeing fundamentalists sitting at the feet of New Evangelicals (such as those at Dallas Theological Seminary) in their pursuit of degrees, and increasingly we are seeing New Evangelical authors (or even modernists such as Bruce Metzger and Kurt Aland) promoted in fundamentalist schools.

The next 10 years will witness a rapid theological slide by fundamentalists who have been captivated by the lure of what the late David Otis Fuller called SCHOLAROLATRY.

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